

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Learning From The City? The Construction of Romanian Elites.

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This thesis will focus on the changes that modernization, especially during the transition period from communism to capitalism, brought to the use of the terms “domn” (sir) and “doamna” (lady) in Romania. The main question of the research will be whether these terms are still used and if they are used with the same meaning as they were before: in short, what does it mean to be ‘lady’ or ‘sir’ in modern Romania? The thesis will try to examine the way modern life lessened the differences between country side/rural life and town/urban life and between people with different educational levels. In Romania little research has been done examining how modernization affects everyday life and how individuals view and understand the world. Modernization is a key word in almost every field in Romania today, but the human dimension especially that of everyday life has not received much attention. The thesis will try to give a perspective on how the recent social transformations have changed the way people view themselves and the opportunities that developed as a result.

Romania is an East European country in transition. This means that among other things that for Romanians things seem to change rapidly and sometimes abruptly in very short time, often without much sense or logic. The result is that Romanians have had to learn how to adapt very quickly and to learn new social and material skills almost every day. Romania and her passage from socialism to capitalism can be a laboratory for anthropological research on some of the disciplines central and emerging themes. Among these is how the elite is self constructed and self selected over time. Another is the role that shifts in elites can play in a country's and a culture's economic and cultural transitions. This research will also add to the literature on Romania because while elite's effects, both positive and negative have received much media attention, the scholarly literature is almost silent in how elites are defined and emerged since 1989. The study of the elites will also bring a better understanding of the way people in Romania behave, understand and accept each other. It will also help us to understand their goals and how these got defined in this transition period in Romania's history. Looking at how Romanians think about (categorize) each other will also help the rest of the world understand Romanian culture and society. This is important - especially for those inside and outside the country who have a stake in Romania's future.

